

GUIDE: Bias in evidence-based assessment

Topic Purpose:

The purpose of this topic is to review the topic of bias in assessment. Key information includes a definition of bias, sources and types of bias, harms created by bias in clinical assessment, and how bias can be mitigating using a new tool referred to as SUM (sources of bias, understand the impact, mitigate bias).

Video and Slides:

Length of video: 29 minutes

Content:

The video focuses on discussing bias in measurement and includes the following topics:

- Definition of bias particularly in a general social context
- Bias is not a binary characteristic of tests – more of question of nature and extent to which bias is present in any assessment situation due to various sources
- How bias in assessment can negatively impact clinical practice and cause harm
- Bias is systematic error in measurement
- Overview of types / sources of bias in measurement
- How bias shows up in assessment related to the client, the clinician, and the assessment instrument
- Attention to cultural bias in the forms of racism and ableism
- Introducing the SUM process to assess bias in assessment
 - Sources of bias
 - Understand the impact
 - Mitigate biases
- Use of the SUM bias tool in two cases
 - Preschooler with language delay and concern for hearing loss
 - Bilingual adult with chronic aphasia

Activities:

The activity presents three clinical vignettes – one for pediatric speech-language pathology, one for adult speech-language pathology, and one for audiology. For each vignette, the learner is asked to develop an assessment plan (interview questions and assessment methods and tools) based on anticipated assessment needs presented in the vignette. Then, once the assessment plan is developed, the learner is asked to use the SUM process (described in the video) to assess risks of bias and plan for ways to mitigate that bias. This is intended to be a small group activity, although could be adapted for an individual assignment if desired. Example answers are provided, but recognize that these answers would change depending on the specific assessment methods chosen.

Some additional considerations for this activity:

- This activity assumes that the learner has sufficient background knowledge to generate an assessment plan and to know available tests, tools, and methods from which to choose. Thus, this exercise may be better suited to learners who have had the opportunity to gain some initial exposure to and practice with assessment tools. Learners who have no or very limited experience or background with assessment may struggle with how to develop an assessment plan and which tools to use, thus preventing them from getting to the key focus of this activity

which is assessing the risk of bias in the assessment plan. Instructors can help by providing some guidance on the extent of the assessment plan to be developed.

- Instructors who wish to use this activity with learners who are newer to assessment and do not have exposure to a wide range of assessment tools may want to actually develop some sample assessment plans for the learners, providing sufficient resources or information about the assessment methods to lay the foundation for this exercise. Then the learners could be asked to use the SUM process to evaluate the assessment plan for bias and recommend mitigations for that bias in the assessment plans they have been given.
- At the end of the activity, a blank template is provided that instructors can use to generate their own vignettes.

Resource:

The resource provides a list of references and additional resources available to further explore the issue of bias in assessment.